

PHILIP MORRIS

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TO: J. Scul
FROM: Sherry
SUBJECT: Focus G

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HIGHLIGHTS

Most respondents, claiming to be aware of what nicotine is, identified it as the addictive element in cigarettes. Their reaction to a 97% nicotine-free product was positive because of its perceived health advantage and uniqueness. However, a concern emerged regarding the manner in which the nicotine would be removed -- participants wanted assurance that the tobacco would not be chemically treated.

Trial interest was high, although repurchasing appeared to be dependent upon the product's ability to deliver good taste; for some participants there was an expectation that the removal of nicotine might result in diminished satisfaction. Those most willing to make the trade-off of taste for reduced nicotine were smokers concerned with health and/or quitting.

Some respondents felt that a 97% nicotine-free cigarette fit with Merit's low tar, "healthier" image. However, the linkage suggested good taste only to current Merit smokers as well as a few competitive flavor low smokers. The majority of competitive smokers felt the Merit name conveyed an unacceptable taste, and therefore they would reject a new Merit entry.

Advertising using the Merit name was explored. Because of their informative nature, the copy-oriented print ads with "summary headlines" seemed to be the best vehicle for presenting the product. In particular, "YEARS OF RESEARCH HAVE TAKEN OUT NICOTINE AND LEFT IN FLAVOR" emerged as very effective since it promised a "healthier" yet good tasting cigarette. Although there was a lot of copy to read, "HOW A HILL OF BEANS HELPED PERCOLATE A NEW CONCEPT IN SMOKING" was best able to explain the product's point of difference due to the decaffeinated coffee analogy. Further, "INTRODUCING THE WORLD'S FIRST 97% NICOTINE-FREE CIGARETTE" was applauded for being straightforward, clear and concise.

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